

Animals - Seal

Rarely Seen Hooded Seal Spotted Around Local Waters

Some people thought she was a walrus, others likened her to the Loch Ness Monster, but Harbormaster Donald Beers said Monday the 800-pound Arctic visitor spotted around town in recent days is really a Hooded Seal, an extremely rare sight in waters this far south.

Beers warns people to observe her from afar because seals can be aggressive.

"She's going to hang around for a while it appears. It's extremely rare for a Hooded Seal to come from the Arctic this far south. This weather must be like Bermuda for her. Usually they aren't seen below northern Maine."

This is the second year in a row that a Hooded Seal has been spotted in Duxbury Bay, Beers said. "We're not sure if this is the same one or a new one."

Beers said harbor seals are regular visitors to the area, but this one is unique. He said the seal is not believed to be sick or injured.

People began calling the *Clipper* last weekend to report seeing her along the banks of the Bluefish River on Powder Point near a dock off King Caesar Rd. One woman reportedly threw her some canned tunafish, which she gobbled right up. Others said she appeared to be eating ice.

Beers said he cannot emphasize enough the warning not to get too close to the aquatic mammals, which are known to be solitary except in breeding season.

This one is estimated to be between 8 and 12 feet long. Beers said the only mammals known to prey on the huge seal are Orcas (whales) and polar bears.

A large crowd gathered on the banks of the Bluefish last Friday, many with cameras in hand.

In addition to the Bluefish River, the seal flipped up on top of the Battelle Ocean Sciences floats. Beers said

he suspects the seal is enjoying the rich shellfish beds in Duxbury Bay.

Officials at the New England Aquarium were alerted of the sighting and were expected to send down a team of observers.

Beers has had reports of other unusual visitors this winter. A coyote walked over the Powder Point Bridge past a jogger last week about 6 am and on out toward the Gurnet, and 3 Snowy Owls were spotted along Duxbury Beach. The "well-fed" Coyote was seen leaving the beach the way it came about 3 to 4 days later, Beers said.